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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PM-HDP, DRL, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP AND S/GHD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [CB](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS VETTING FOR INDIVIDUALS TO ATTEND THE GARUDA
SHIELD EXERCISE JUNE 11-29, 2009 IN BANDUNG, INDONESIA

REF: 03 SECSTATE 034981

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (U) This is an action cable. Please see Paragraph nine.

¶2. (U) Reftel is guidance for screening nominees for U.S. sponsored training programs.

¶3. (U) To comply with the Leahy amendment relative to U.S. sponsored security assistance training, the U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh has conducted local human rights vetting for the following individuals selected for the Garuda Shield Exercise from June 11-29, 2009 in Bandung, Indonesia.

NAME: Samreth Sarin (Male)
DPOB: 28 Aug 1972, Kandal
POSITION: Deputy Chief of S3
RANK: Lieutenant Colonel
DEPT/UNIT: 911 Special Airborne Brigade

¶4. (SBU) According to 1997 investigations by the Cambodia Office of the United Nations Center for Human Rights (now the UN Cambodia Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), members of the 911 Brigade were involved with human rights abuses during July 1997 factional fighting in Phnom Penh and other areas of Cambodia. The investigation report states that the 911 Brigade had detained Lt. Col. Sao Sophal together with other soldiers. Sao Sophal reportedly did not return after his second interrogation session with 911 soldiers, and the OHCHR report states that a reliable military source confirmed Sao Sophal was executed near where he was captured.

An unidentified male body was later exhumed at the same location; the body had no clothing on the other than underwear, the hands were tied behind his back, and there were bullet wounds to the head. Sao Sophal has been missing since the incident. The investigation report also states that the 911 Brigade detained and tortured a total of 33 soldiers aligned with the FUNCINPEC party during the July 1997 factional fighting. The torture was reportedly committed to obtain intelligence or to extract confessions from the detainees. Detainees reported beatings while tied up, and being hit with a belt and lengths of wood, kicking, and punching. An iron vice was also used on several detainees to squeeze fingers or hands until they responded satisfactorily.

¶5. (SBU) Post believes the allegations concerning 911 Brigade soldiers are credible. Investigations of the incidents did not result in the identification of specific officers or subunits responsible for the human rights abuses. As the UN report on the incidents states, it is difficult to know whether the abuses "resulted from orders or were committed by local officials who took the opportunity to settle old disputes." The full UN Center for Human Rights report on the 1997 incidents can be found online at "http://cambodia.ohchr.org/EN/statement_1997.htm". No members of the

911 Brigade were held responsible for the July 1997 incidents.

¶6. (SBU) The individual named in this cable was not/not a member of 911 Brigade in 1997, having joined the brigade in 1999. Prior to 1999 he was embedded in a French military assistance unit where he worked during the time of the 1997 factional fighting.

¶7. (U) U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh has reviewed its files and finds that, as of this date, it possesses no credible information of gross violations of human rights by the above individual.

¶8. (U) Individuals will attend the Garuda Shield Exercise from June 11-29 in Bandung, Indonesia.

¶9. (U) Action request: Please verify whether the Department possesses any credible information that the individual named above has been implicated in gross violations of human rights.

¶10. (U) Points of contacts for Amembassy Phnom Penh are Major Wayne Turnbull at turnbullpw@state.gov or tel: 855-23-728-219, or Janet Deutsch at deutschje@state.gov or tel: 855-23-728-118.

RODLEY